



& Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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For jobs, homes, free movement WORKERS UNITE!

On 14 July the combined forces of the far right will once again march in London in support of the imprisoned far-right “journalist”, and former leader of the English Defence League, Tommy Robinson.

On 9 June, this far right — the Democratic Football Lads Alliances, For Britain and other groups — managed to mobilise up to 15,000 people to a rally in Whitehall. There is no guarantee this loose alliance will be able to get the same numbers this time, but they should not be underestimated. The left, labour and anti-fascist movements need to pull out all the stops to build a strong opposing force on the streets of London on 14 July.

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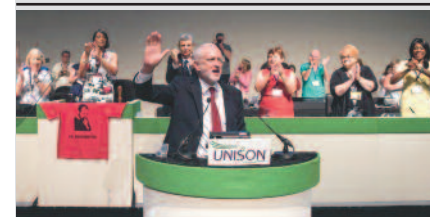
Inside:



No new runway at Heathrow!

Will Sefton reports on the vote over a third runway at Heathrow, and argues Labour should have voted against it.

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Labour and the unions

Unison activist Ruth Cashman spoke at Ideas for Freedom, 23-24 June, about where next for Labour and the relationship with the unions.

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Life and politics in Iraq

Nadia Mahmood of the Worker-communist Party of Iraq spoke to *Solidarity*.

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Join Labour!

Ana Oppenheim of “Another Europe is Possible” on Labour and Brexit.

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Comeback for super-bankers

By Gerry Bates

The thermometer-busting moment of the 2008 economic crash was the collapse on 15 September 2008 of Lehman Brothers, then the USA's fourth-largest investment bank. It was the biggest bankruptcy in US history.

After it, it seemed doubtful for a while whether the other big investment banks could survive without drastic reshaping.

By 2017, so the *Financial Times* reports (12 June 2018), "group-wide profits last year of \$78.4 billion across the top nine investment banks — excluding the much-changed Bank of America — were higher than the \$75.4 billion recorded in 2007".

Investment banks are distinguished from high street banks by the fact that they do not take deposits. They operate solely as high-class gamblers in financial markets, padding the odds with large fee revenues from giving advice to or organising sales of securities for

corporations.

Before 2007-8, in the USA particularly, they drew large incomes from processing and packaging mortgage debt into tradable securities.

Their revival is an index of a general recovery of profits and top incomes, which has been going on for some years now.

Overall employment figures have also recovered, though in the USA (exceptionally) they remain below 2007 rates. Wages have recovered more slowly, or scarcely at all in Britain. The proportion of world trade to output, which had risen consistently since the late 1940s, remains markedly lower than in 2007, with little sign of a turnaround.

The juicy figures for the investment banks reflect a rise in financial-asset prices much outstripping goods-and-services prices, a divergence which is often the forerunner of a crash.

The next crash will hit a world capitalist system shakier than in 2007.

Brexit and the "Jersey option"

By Rhodri Evans

As the Tories stumble, grass-roots opposition to Brexit is swelling. Some 100,000 marched in London on 23 June to demand no Tory Brexit formula go through without a referendum on it — many times more than marched the next Saturday for the NHS.

The "Left Against Brexit" tour organised by Another Europe is Possible starts on 4 July in Manchester. In many cities Workers' Liberty people are helping to set up "Left Against Brexit" committees, for the tour meetings but also to continue and grow after that, with debates, street stalls, motions and speakers to labour movement bodies.

Crucial here is to dig down to the rank and file. A layer of the Labour left is resisting the push from below. Usually that layer don't positively back Brexit, but they do argue that Labour should continue to go along with the leadership's evasive policy of "accepting" Brexit, "accepting" free movement will end, and criticising the Tories while saying as little as possible about Labour's own alternatives.

On 27-29 June the meeting of EU governments told the Tories that they "insist on the need for intensified efforts" and demand "further clarity as well as realistic and workable proposals from the UK".

Prime Minister Theresa May has called a special cabinet meeting for 6 July, and is due to publish a Brexit "white paper" on 9 July.

There are sure to be fumbles along the way, with the possibility of the Tories lurching into a "hard Brexit". Informed comment in the serious bourgeois press, however, suggests that strong and increasing big-business pressure may well push the Tories into a fairly "soft" Brexit.

Some on the left have made it their pitch that the Tories will produce a very "hard" Brexit. That may not be true. The argument against Brexit should be made on the positive and principled grounds of free movement, lower borders, social levelling-up, and a fight to democratise the EU, not just on the negative claim that the Tories will impose extreme Brexit.

According to the *Financial Times* and the *Economist*, the Tories are considering a "backstop arrangement", the "Jersey option", which

leaves the UK in a customs union and in the Single Market for goods (not services) for a long period of time, while clamping down on workers entering Britain from the EU.

The FT says that Michael Gove, a key leader of the Tory pro-Brexiteers, "has emerged as a key figure in a search for a cabinet compromise", fobbing off the more obsessive Brexiteers with "the possibility that the exit terms might be 'improved' once Britain has left the EU".

The Labour leaders' current trajectory suggests a stance of voting against the final Tory formula in October (or whenever), followed by a shrug which says what's done is done and Labour will now accept it and move on.

In light of the "Jersey option" talk, that would be irresponsible. Even if the Tories get a deal through Parliament, there will remain much to campaign about.

A reversal of the curbs the Tories put on free movement. Making permanent and extending customs-union and Single-Market ties. And then a reversal of Brexit.

Stop Brexit! "People's Brexit" is an illusion

Ana Oppenheim of the Another Europe is Possible campaign spoke to *Solidarity*.

Q: Labour's current policy on Brexit is framed by Keir Starmer's "Six Tests". These tests, if applied, would almost certainly rule out Labour endorsing any Tory Brexit. Why aren't the six tests enough?

A: We know that a Tory Brexit deal will not meet those six tests or be compatible with socialist values like defending migrant rights or workers' rights. So, what happens next is key.

That's why we're campaigning for a people's vote: a referendum on the deal, with the option of remaining in the EU. Because democracy is about people being able to change their minds — and that's especially important as it becomes clear what a disaster Brexit will be.

Q: So if Labour's "six tests" almost certainly means rejecting Brexit, why are we hearing so much talk of Labour delivering a "People's Brexit"?

A: Firstly, Labour is not in government, and is unlikely to be in government in the next year. So it won't be down to Labour to deliver Brexit. I think the "People's Brexit" line is being adopted out of fear of scaring away Brexit voters. But it is an illusion. It is not going to hap-

ANOTHER EUROPE IS POSSIBLE

pen any time soon, and a progressive Brexit is simply impossible full stop. We should campaign for a people's Europe, not a people's Brexit.

Q: Won't opposing Brexit cost Labour the election?

A: I don't think so. For most people the priority is not Brexit itself. It is concerns about jobs, houses and wages, and Labour has answers on them.

We won't win votes by triangulating. 2017 showed that we didn't win millions of votes by moving towards the centre. Now is the time to be a radical voice, defending migrants, defending principle, supporting internationalism, while giving people solutions that they can believe in.

Q: But while a majority of members appear to be anti-Brexit and in favour of a referendum on the deal, many left wing activists and officers in Labour and some trade unions strongly oppose a turn against Brexit, even if they privately disapprove of Brexit. Why?

A: There are two categories of

such people on the left.

The first is a group that says that loyalty to Corbyn is the only major priority on the left. But that ignores Corbyn's support for party democracy, an empowered membership, standing up for principles, and so on.

There is a second category who believe that a socialist exit from the EU is possible. They talk about the problems with the EU, its attacks on refugees and so on. But you can't build socialism border by border. There aren't local solutions to global problems. We need an international movement for socialism that goes across borders and takes on global capital.

Q: You talk about an international movement to defeat capital. But how do you square that with advocating membership of the EU, which is an emphatically neoliberal, pro-capitalist entity?

A: What is the alternative? Brexit is a nationalist project that goes against the principles of international co-operation. The EU is fundamentally flawed. But so is the British state. Going back to nation

states is not the answer.

The EU provides freedom of movement and a framework for uniting the left internationally. We have to confront capital, sooner or later. But building more nationalism, more borders, stands in the way of building the international workers' coalition we need.

Q: Some activists who disagree with stopping Brexit or organising a referendum on the deal argue that if Brexit is reversed, or if there is a threat that Brexit might be reversed, there could be a rise in the

far right in response. What do you think of that?

A: The Brexit vote has already empowered the far right. There has been a surge in hate crimes and larger far right marches. The labour movement has to oppose the far right.

We are not saying: stop Brexit in parliament. We are saying: give people a vote on the outcome.

Brexit means an increase in the forces of the right. Brexit will hurt everyone, but also especially marginalised groups. And we have to stand up against that.

Unite members oppose Brexit

By Gemma Short

A poll of Unite members conducted by YouGov has shown a majority in favour of remaining in the single market, and in favour of a referendum on the final deal.

The poll, released ahead of Unite's national policy conference which happened in Brighton on 2-6 July, puts increased pressure on the Labour leadership to stop trying to fudge its Brexit policy and come out in favour of a softer-Brexit or stopping Brexit all together.

A motion submitted to Unite policy conference by West Midlands car workers supporting a

"people's vote" fell in favour of the Unite EC statement which includes their support for access to the Customs Union and membership of the Single Market. It calls for the election of a Labour government as the best way to deal with the fiasco of a Tory Brexit, but it is unclear as to what the Labour Party should be proposing about Brexit in such an election.

57% of members surveyed thought that leaving the single market would be bad for jobs and 58% believed Britain would be worse off outside of the single market in general.

57% backed a "people's vote on the final deal", including 24% of those who voted leave originally.

Labour fails to stand up against Heathrow expansion

By Keith Road

With the support of 119 Labour MPs the government got a proposed third runway at Heathrow through the House of Commons on 26 June.

The government cites numerous benefits from expansion — to international trade and new foreign direct investment for example.

Unite and the GMB, the largest unions representing workers at Heathrow, are uncritical backers of the project, citing only the prospect of new jobs as the key factor in assessing whether an infrastructure project is good or bad.

The Transport Select Committee's report on the proposal stated that the government were unclear on the environmental impact as well as the health and community impacts on the area effected by the expansion. The government response has been to push these responsibilities onto Heathrow's

owners, who unsurprisingly say they can meet all the necessary targets on air quality, despite already failing in the case of nitrogen levels to do so now!

Although figures are contested, Heathrow is probably the single greatest carbon emitter in the UK. Expansion can only mean this getting worse.

Heathrow is owned and propped up by a huge amount of investment by banks, hedge funds and other private interests. The expansion of Heathrow is about providing increased benefits for these backers and about competing with other major European hubs like Amsterdam Schiphol.

The TSC report also concluded that a further 325,000 people would be newly impacted by significant noise pollution, an issue which Heathrow has consistently failed to acknowledge. Current arrangements to deal with this issue have been pitiful.

Labour set out four tests on air-

port expansion in the south east: meeting the UK's capacity demands; not breaching noise and air pollution obligations; allowing the UK to meet its climate change targets in their entirety; and supporting growth across the whole country.

Expansion of Heathrow can not meet all of Labour's modest tests.

Labour's decision to hold a free vote in the Commons, on an issue where official policy is to oppose, is baffling.

John McDonnell, whose constituency includes Heathrow, has been a long-term and vocal opponent of Heathrow expansion. Jeremy Corbyn has also long opposed a third runway. Yet somehow they were either unable or unwilling to whip for a vote against the plans, and potentially stop the plans.

McDonnell would doubtless argue that the series of legal challenges that will now be lodged by various London boroughs and



neighbouring councils, and anti expansion campaigns will continue to delay the decision until a Labour government can come to power and reverse the proposal. But why not oppose it now?

The vote on Heathrow shows that political cowardice has crept into the thinking of even some of the most principled left wing MPs. Shadow Cabinet members Angela Rayner and Jonathan Ashworth voted in favour of expansion while Ed Miliband, former leader and Environment Secretary under Gordon Brown, voted against.

The confused thinking on issues like this which are key to Labour

having an environmental policy that is in any way adequate do not bode well. The jobs-at-any-cost view from some of the major unions must be challenged.

The labour movement including local parties should start to discuss the kind of just transition and sustainable carbon neutral jobs we want to see created by a Labour government.

It would mean utilising the skills of the hundreds of thousands of workers currently in harmful and polluting industry and providing skilled jobs that will benefit rather than destroy the planet.

Half stand against Erdoğan

By Marksist Tutum

The elections on June 24 have unsurprisingly resulted in Erdoğan being elected as president of the new political setup which was narrowly voted for in a constitutional referendum about a year ago...

All state resources were employed, 90% of the media have been turned into government bulletins, the image of Erdoğan appeared like Big Brother on every media outlet, while opposition candidates were largely kept away from public view in almost every field.

The Erdoğan regime, composed of the state, party, religious orders and the media merged into an organic whole, had a free hand in resorting to all kinds of lies, manipulation, and illegitimate means... such as that the foreign powers are jealous of Turkey's growth, that the "headscarf will be banned again", and that "we will be denied of the right to practice our religion" etc.

Such lies and falsifications made an impact on the masses that vote the AKP in that they overrode the sense of looming economic collapse, the cost of which will be paid by the working masses; increasing living costs; and the anti-democratic character of the one-man regime.

However the regime has failed in achieving an overwhelming vote. Half of society stand against this regime, which is crucial.

Erdoğan made his move by declaring snap elections in the hope of catching the opposition unprepared, lacking leadership, disorganised, that is, in a weak and



Selahattin Demirtaş, the imprisoned candidate of the HDP

low-morale state.

With the start of the election campaigns the masses began to see the election as a means through which they can express their discontent.

The period of election campaigns created a political revival in the country in which political argument and criticism of government acquired legitimacy.

Although Erdoğan won, thanks to the state-party-order-media apparatuses, he could not mobilise the masses as before. Throughout the campaign period the rallies held by AKP and Erdoğan were generally weaker and lacking in enthusiasm. AKP and Erdoğan could not even enjoy the level of excitement enjoyed by [HDP candidate] Selahattin Demirtaş who had no choice but to carry on his campaign from prison, sending AKP and Er-

doğan into a rage.

Turkish capitalism is faced with serious troubles. It is having a hard time due also to its imperialistic policies in the Middle East. On the other hand, as its level of capital accumulation is not high compared to imperialist countries, the Turkish economy is highly prone to capitalist crisis. There are many signs of a coming economic collapse. It is the task of class revolutionaries to make use of every opportunity to push forward the struggle of the working class.

Class revolutionaries will press ahead with their efforts to explain the truth to those interested workers and youth and win them over to the ranks of organised struggle against capitalism.

Like the old PRI

By Pablo Velasco

Left populist candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador won the Mexican presidential election on 1 July, but his victory offers little for the beleaguered Mexican working class.

López Obrador, often known after his initials as AMLO, won over half (53%) of the vote, defeating Ricardo Anaya of the conservative National Action Party (PAN) and Jose Antonio Meade of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Although López Obrador led in the polls for months, his victory was surprisingly comfortable considering the history of fraudulent elections in Mexico.

López Obrador belonged to the ruling PRI for the first decade and a half of his political life. In 1989 he joined the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and ran unsuccessfully for state governor in Tabasco in 1994. There he organised a campaign of civil resistance against rising electricity bills. López Obrador was governor of Mexico City between 2000 and 2005, before unsuccessfully running for president in a PRD-led coalition in 2006 and 2012.

In 2014 López Obrador founded the Movement for National Regeneration (Morena). The acronym alludes to La Virgen Morena of Guadalupe, Mexico's patron saint. It is also a term for dark-skinned, indigenous Mexicans. But López Obrador is socially conservative, opposing both legal abortion and gay rights. The party has more than 300,000 members.

He is very much within the tradition of the old ruling PRI, espe-

cially before its neoliberal turn in the 1980s. As Mexico City mayor he backed private construction interests to gentrify the historic city and rich neighbourhoods.

Like the old PRI, López Obrador brings together elements of the capitalist class with organised labour. He apparently intends to include Guillermo Ortiz, a former central bank chief and Santiago Levy of the Inter-American Development Bank in his government to reassure the markets. But he has also courted Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, the miners' union leader accused of embezzling millions of pesos.

The Partido Revolucionario de las Trabajadores (PRT, Revolutionary Workers' Party), the main Mexican "Fourth International" group, originally backed the campaign of María de Jesús Patricio Martínez (known as Marichuy), leader of the Indigenous Council of Government. However Mexican electoral law makes it extremely difficult to gain the required signatures needed to get on the ballot paper.

The PRT argued that the question of whether or not to vote was secondary to the need to organise the anti-capitalist left. This is evasive.

The PRT was a mass party during the 1980s, winning a handful of MPs and leading social struggles. It neutered itself by supporting the PRD in successive elections instead of fielding its own candidates.

The Mexican left will have to organise itself independently and militantly against López Obrador and the rest of the bourgeois politicians that run the Mexican state.

Morning Star at odds on antisemitism

THE LEFT

By Jim Denham

We publish extracts from an article by two leading members of the Communist Party of Britain, Mary Davis and Phil Katz, which appeared in the *Morning Star* of 20 June.

It makes a refreshing change from the absolute anti-Zionism and denial of anti-semitism as a serious problem on the left that generally characterises that paper's coverage of the subject.

It is also good to see the paper carrying such sharp criticism of an earlier article published in the *Star* that clearly crossed the line into outright antisemitism. However, the fact that the offending article (now removed from the *Star's* website but webcached at bit.ly/ms18jun) was published in the first place should be a lesson to all those who deny that antisemitism is a problem on the left.

"The shambling article by John Elder 'Rising anti-semitism cannot be tackled without addressing Israel's crimes' (June 18) betrays no understanding of the relationship of class to culture, religion and anti-racism and really cannot be left to go unchallenged..."

"Its rationale, that Jews everywhere are responsible for the actions of the Israeli government, is by reverse exactly the argument put forward by the Israeli government and right-wing Zionists...."

"But that cannot be acceptable in a daily paper of the left, which has anti-imperialism at its heart and should be challenging all forms of racism, including anti-semitism."

"Elder says: 'Mainstream Jewish communities everywhere ... appear unwilling to accept the connection between developing international anti-semitism (or anti-Israel sentiment) and Israel's decades long ... acts of barbarism.'..."

"Elder says this is true for the Jewish 'diaspora'. So Jews worldwide are to be consid-

ered collectively responsible. Therefore the billionaire's interest is no different from that of an Israeli dockworker. Israel's actions cast a pale of guilt over this 'Jewish diaspora' and all Jews have to denounce it before their concerns about what Elder calls 'apparent' anti-semitism are dealt with.

"This is collective guilt whatever way one comes at it. We argue forcefully as a paper, that British Muslims should not be stigmatised for the actions of Saudi rulers, or Isis. But when it comes to Jews, other standards apply..."

"As if anti-semitism didn't exist across the world, before Israel was formed — when in fact, it was common before capitalism appeared..."

"What is alarming about current day anti-semitism is that it continues to use the same themes that have been used to stigmatise and justify genocide of the Jews for centuries. And where the Labour Party is forced to confront hundreds of cases and act on them, it

can hardly be 'apparent'.

"Many of these instances are not linked to Israel and include conspiracy theories and Holocaust denial. The Labour Party should be applauded for taking anti-semitism seriously and dealing with it robustly."

"To say anti-semitism isn't an issue, is a conspiracy to bring down Jeremy Corbyn or that no British Jew can challenge anti-semitism without being called an apologist for genocide is a dangerous path. It is certain to drive those genuinely concerned with anti-semitism into the hands of Israeli propagandists, who can simply say: 'We told you so.'"

A statement subsequently appeared on the *Morning Star* website saying that the original article "crossed a line in attributing anti-semitism to the policies of the Israeli government and made demands on the 'Jewish diaspora' and 'Jewish community' as if these were responsible for Israeli policy or obliged to account for it".

Leave voters cannot be ignored

LETTERS

Martin Thomas (*Solidarity* 473) appeared to, perhaps inadvertently, equate the European Economic Area (EEA) with the countries of Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Croatia.

The EEA is more or less the whole of both the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) — an enormous European single market across which there is free movement of persons, goods, services and capital including the right to seek residence in any member country.

The UK, as a member of the EEA, would be part of a free trade zone covering the vast majority of the European continent.

Both the Conservative and Labour positions are riven with similar irreconcilable contradictions.

It is perfectly clear that most people who voted Leave wanted "control over laws, borders and money". That has to mean leaving the customs union and the single market as well as the EU. You are either in the Customs Union and/or Single Market or you are outside.

I was not surprised by the 2016 Referendum result although I was by the sheer scale of the Leave vote in areas like mine. If a second vote was held, I think it could be as much as 55+% now voting to Leave, having dared to defy the establishment and the sky not having yet fallen in.

I agree with your comments (*Solidarity* 469) that Labour's official "evolving" line of "wanting the benefits of the Single Market" without being in the Single Market and "a" customs union but not "the" customs union with the EU is sheer sophistry. They are, of course, advocating de-facto membership of both, but still pretending "we are going to leave the EU." Yes, those very bits which might have given us democratic, sovereign influence.

Playing not very clever word games and manoeuvres is frankly not going to wash with the 52-55+% who just want us out of the EU. This is dangerous for Labour as Corbyn's main (only?) political selling point was



straight talking and authenticity.

I think Theresa May is an "emotional" Little Englander Leaver but a rational Remainer. At the start of her premiership, she talked very clearly that the UK was leaving the EU and that included the single market and customs union. Since then economic reality has started to kick in, and she has had to retreat at an absolute rate of knots.

DISASTER

The rational Remainers know a hard or a soft-hard Brexit will be an economic disaster, with dreadful consequences for the public finances, including public investment and spending. They are desperately trying to be "as close as possible" to the Single Market and Customs Union but still claiming to leave the EU. This is Labour policy also.

We still have a majority of the population who feel angry, frustrated and resentful, who voted Leave for very clear reasons, and two years later see bugger all progress or government coherence. The actual-in-practice-leaving of the EU kicked down the road for at

least two more years. Plus an "ultimate" government and opposition aim to be "as close to the Single Market and Customs Union as possible".

This seething, anger and frustration may yet explode, and not in a good way for those of us on the progressive and socialist left.

We see hard right reactionary politicians such as Jacob Rees-Mogg, Nigel Farage and Anne-Marie Waters, waiting in the wings, stirring, provoking, and maybe attempting seizures of power, if the Conservative Party finally splits open.

The 2016 Referendum can only really be reversed by a similar vote of the people, perhaps and probably on whether to accept or reject the terms of any agreement to withdraw and any agreement on the future relationship between the EU and UK.

That surely would have to include options of leaving without an agreement or remaining in on current terms.

We need clear minded, principled, strategic and progressive politics to start to take command.

Andrew Northall, Kettering

Support services are vital

I have been a victim of both rape and domestic violence so I read the letter about Greer's latest opinions with interest.

Having spent a great deal of time in court and in contact with the police I have come to appreciate the fact that often there is just not enough evidence to prosecute.

These crimes are often committed in private and by manipulative people who take care to avoid leaving evidence.

I think what most victims want is to be safe. If there is little chance of conviction then many victims will not want to go through the trauma of a court case, indeed the process may increase risks.

While I agree that court processes need to be more accessible and supportive of victims, I think there also needs to be wider acceptance that the lack of conviction doesn't mean the crime didn't happen and that choosing not to report these crimes is, for many victims, by far the best choice.

I do not agree with Greer that sentences should be lowered to increase conviction rates, as it suggests the crime of rape is not so bad. It is. Rape is not "bad sex". The effects of rape often leave permanent psychological scars, and it can take years to overcome the initial trauma. PTSD can be devastating — flashbacks and dissociative episodes can be as powerful as other delusions and render victims utterly disorientated.

I very much agree with the author that refuges and counselling provision needs to be increased. The counselling needs of victims are specialist. In my area, the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service will not take me on. Charity-run counselling that is highly effective is also under resourced. In my area waiting lists are closed.

Conviction rates are not everything, but support services are essential. These allow women to escape abuse, to recover and find ways for her and her children to be safe.

Anonymous



Far right demonstrators fought police in Whitehall on 9 June

Stop the far right on 14 July

On 14 July the combined forces of the far right will once again march in London in support of the imprisoned far-right “journalist”, and former leader of the English Defence League, Tommy Robinson.

On 9 June, this far right — the Democratic Football Lads Alliances, For Britain and other groups — managed to mobilise up to 15,000 people to a rally in Whitehall. There is no guarantee this loose alliance will be able to get the same numbers this time, but they should not be underestimated. The left, labour and anti-fascist movements need to pull out all the stops to build a strong opposing force on the streets of London on 14 July.

In previous periods of intense far right activity, which never brought such numbers onto the streets, the opposition managed to bring out thousands to oppose them. However, over recent years the labour movement

has outsourced “anti-racist” activity to groups like Unite Against Fascism, and more recently Stand Up To Racism, and consequently has forgotten the necessity of independent mobilisations and campaigning.

In addition, the Socialist Workers Party, who run SUTR and UAF, no longer have the capacity to bring out the numbers they once did.

The mobilisations on 6 May and 9 June led by these groups were very weak in comparison to the thousands that were brought out against the EDL at their height in Leeds, Bradford and Bolton. This new movement has deliberately chosen to gather in Whitehall in central London, away from local communities and town centres. That also makes mobilisation against them more difficult.

It is the responsibility of the left and labour movement to make its own efforts to bring

people onto the streets — and in numbers. The Labour Party has over 500,000 members, a huge potential force. Local branches and constituency Labour Parties could turn themselves into hubs of activity to oppose the far right. This would involve mobilising for the demonstrations and also campaigning for positive alternatives to the social discontent the far right feed on. Trade union branches can do the same.

Unlike the BNP and EDL the new far right, in focussing on Tommy Robinson’s imprisonment for contempt of court, is using the banner of free speech, railing against the establishment for colluding to destroy British and western values. For example UKIP leader and MEP Gerard Batten has spoken of wealthy foreign financiers who are trying to undermine these values. This new far right openly embraces conspiracy theories and fake news. The antisemitic undertone of the propaganda is becoming more prominent, alongside anti-Muslim bigotry.

UKIP are trying to position themselves as a political expression of this movement. Under Nigel Farage, the Party dissociated itself from the organised far-right, banning membership for anyone who had previously been in the EDL or BNP. That would have excluded Tommy Robinson, but UKIP are now very keen to support him.

UKIP

Now that Brexit has officially been “won” and apparently (if not in reality) is about to be delivered by the political establishment, UKIP have struggled to find their political place. Electorally they are in steep decline. Under Batten UKIP have taken a sharp turn to the right.

Since 9 June UKIP have had an influx of alt-right members who want to consolidate the right wing turn. YouTube figures like Count Dankula (Mark Meehan) and Sargon of Akkad (Carl Benjamin), as well as Milo Yiannopoulos and Paul Joseph Watson, want

to establish a secure foothold for their ideas in the UK. Some have chosen UKIP as a vehicle.

The rise of far-right populism cannot be disentangled from the rise of Trump and Brexit. Trump’s election, the early prominence of alt-right figure Steve Bannon and the apparent neutrality of the White House on the fascist and white-nationalist demonstrations in Charlottesville, have emboldened the far-right across the US and Europe.

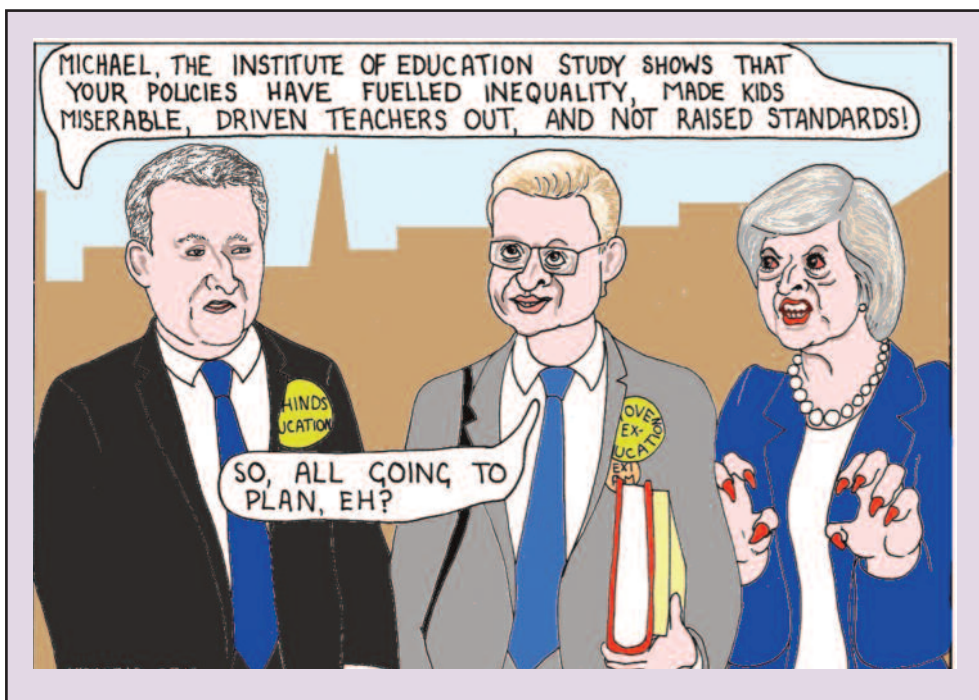
US Republican senators have raised the “Free Tommy” campaign in the Senate; there have been demonstrations in support of him across Europe from France to Hungary.

While Brexit is not the main point of these demonstrations, the far right’s new confidence is certainly linked to the Brexit vote. For some Leave voters the vote represented a kick back against multiculturalism and freedom of movement. It is no coincidence that hate crimes have risen since Brexit. While the targets of much of far right rhetoric are Muslims (only a small proportion of whom would be affected by changes to freedom of movement from the EU), the aspiration to a less diverse Britain is quite clear.

The labour movement must oppose the far right politically and not just with force. In the first place we must undermine the roots of racism and xenophobia by taking on people’s “concerns” about migration and proposing instead working-class unity and a labour movement that fights to win.

The labour movement needs positive demands. We should be unashamedly for freedom of movement and for stopping Brexit.

In place of austerity and cuts we propose a mass campaign of council house building by a Labour government, maximum rents in the private sector, and substantial rises in funding for schools, the NHS and other local services, all of which have been decimated by coalition and Tory cuts since 2010.



Just under 200 people attended Ideas for Freedom 2018, a weekend socialist summer school organised by Workers' Liberty on 23-24 June in London. The title of the school this year was "Socialism Makes Sense", and sessions aimed to make the basic case for a revolutionary socialist transformation of capitalist society.

Another main theme was "challenges of a Labour government", looking at the difficulties likely to be faced by a left-Labour government, for example in confronting the state, and the challenges for class-struggle socialists in relating to such a government and attempting to radicalise and extend its programme.

Other session streams included "revolutionary history", "global solidarity", and "revolutionary socialism 101". Speakers included Amrit Wilson of the South Asia Solidarity Group, who spoke about women's struggles against the Modi government in India; Iranian film-maker and activist Kaveh Abbassian, who spoke about students' and workers' struggles in Iran; UCU rank-and-file activist Rhian Keyse; Labour left activists including Dave Osland and Simon Hannah; and Workers' Liberty supporters including Janine Booth, Ruth Cashman, Jill Mountford, and others.

The event also featured a walking tour of radical East London, focusing particularly on sites connected to the working-class suffrage movement led by Sylvia Pankhurst, and a set-piece debate on "socialism versus capitalism" with Kristian Niemitz from the free-market think tank Institute of Economic Affairs.

Make L

CHALLENGES OF A LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Ruth Cashman speaking at Ideas for Freedom

There are many who think that trade unions have had their day. While new and powerful labour movements are emerging around the world, on the whole the labour movement in Britain is very much on the defensive.

I was born at the end of the miners' strike, and I am in no doubt that trade unionists are on the back foot. The trade union movement is now half the size that it was at its 1979 peak, with vastly fewer elected workplace reps and shop stewards. Strike numbers are at an all-time low.

Around Momentum's foundation, many debates fluttered around about post-class politics, with a big push to foreground digital activism and nebulous ideas of social movements, against the "old language" and forms of organisation of the "old" labour movement.

But until the answer to the question "where is new value created under capitalism?" is something other than "human labour", organised labour will always have unique potential, no matter how weak, how beaten down, or how misled our organisations are at any moment.

John McDonnell has said that Labour should become the "party of strikes". The leadership of Momentum and the Labour Party should throw themselves into supporting strikes, publicly and clearly. Corbyn should be speaking on Picturehouse picket lines, writing articles about the Driver-Only Operation dispute, and why it's important. He should be asking questions about the Mc-Strike at PMQs.

I'm not saying the party hasn't supported strikes; but the support should be proud and it should be foregrounded.

The reason it's not foregrounded is because they're worried they're going to get shit in the press for it. And they will do. And they

Rebuilding a culture of socialism

Jill Mountford gave the closing speech of Ideas for Freedom. We print an excerpt.

We stand out from the rest of the left on our consistent internationalism; we don't fall in line with the left that mourns the death of Castro and hails Cuba as some kind of socialist society.

We critically examine the nature of that society, the rights of the working class and oppressed groups to organise within it; we ask is this self-emancipation of the working class? And conclude it is not.

To praise the remnants of the catastrophe that was Stalinism claiming it be some sort of socialism is political idiocy.

This principle guides us in all international assessments; we don't collapse into the crude positions of supporting the smaller imperialist nations against the larger imperialist nations. We don't choose to side with one reactionary regime against another. We ask what's in the best interests of the working class to build an independent movement that can fight for their own emancipation.

Our approach to Brexit it is not determined by groups of disillusioned members of our class who can see no better solution than to scapegoat and blame other working class people just because they're migrant workers.

Our attitude to Brexit is to stand absolutely firm on migrant rights and the free movement of people, arguing for an end to austerity, arguing that we make the bosses pay for the crisis they created and not the working class, arguing for a positive pro-

gram of building council houses, rebuilding the NHS and the welfare state, creating jobs and services; for decent living wages for all workers.

And we say boldly and clearly how that will be paid for: by taxing the rich and big business!

We argue for a Workers' Government acting with same determination to fight for working-class interests as the Tory government fights for the interests of the boss class.

So bad, so lost, is the culture of socialism in Britain today that we have a Shadow Chancellor who describes himself as Marxist but who cannot say we'll tax the rich and big business to pay for the kind of society we want to create, who cannot say we'll bring the banks into public ownership as the bosses did in their own way to bail them out of the crisis in 2008.

Forty years ago we had a right wing Labour Chancellor who had no problem in saying "we'll squeeze the rich till the pips squeak". Then, the labour movement and class struggle was a strong counter pressure even on the right in the Labour party.

Comrades, the job of the revolutionary socialists is to seize the opportunities around us, to be clear and resolute in the ideas and demands we take into the broader movement. Not to temper them, dilute them or remould them under pressure from the right-wing culture around us.

Looking around the room we give the impression of pretty ordinary bunch of individuals. But collectively, driven by our ambition for our class, the highest ambition



Jill Mountford leading our Walking with Suffragettes tour on Thursday 21 June

for humanity — to create a world based on human need not on private profit, armed with our culture, our tradition and our ideas — we have the potential to do extraordinary things.

We each became socialists through our own experience, through the objective circumstances around us, because we wanted a better world than the one we find ourselves in. We became revolutionary socialists because we engaged with some big ideas and theories.

The AWL has a unique approach, fuelled by unique ideas. If we don't fill that space with our ideas or other ideas will, and they won't be better ideas.

Now we must do the best by our tradition, every one of us, reminding ourselves and each other what we stand for, what our ideas represent.

That means seizing every opportunity that comes our way to make the case for socialism. Socialism makes sense.

Bastani: time for an answer

By Rhodri Evans

Aaron Bastani of Novara Media had — after much to-ing and fro-ing — agreed to debate Brexit with us at Ideas for Freedom 2018, our summer school on 23-24 June.

He didn't show. The session proceeded with only an anti-Brexit, pro-free-movement platform speaker.

Bastani has not responded to our queries about the no-show.

It can't be that he is too fumble-handed to cope with email and other electronic mes-

sages. On his Twitter page he boasts that he has a "PhD in political communications" (presumably, at that university, "giving straight answers to questions" is considered so advanced that it kicks in only at post-doctoral level).

TWEETS

It can't be that he thinks Brexit too unimportant to debate. His Twitter page is full of tweets about Brexit.

The tweets do not tackle the question directly, but instead attack Labour right-wingers who use Brexit as a stick to beat

Corbyn, and insinuate that left-wingers who back free movement are really at one with those right-wingers. But they are about Brexit. This turnaround is worse than the last time Bastani bailed out of a debate with us on Brexit, at a fringe meeting at the NUT teachers' union conference in 2016 shortly before the referendum. Then, at least, he told us (a few hours) in advance that he was bailing out, and gave an explanation.

He had changed his mind, no longer backed Leave, and would now vote Remain. Since then his position has changed several times, but bafflingly.

Debates about Brexit are lamentably few. No political position can gather conviction and momentum until it is tempered in the fires of confrontation with opposing arguments.

We want our anti-Brexit supporters and readers to hear the case for left-wing support (or semi-support, or quarter-support, whatever) for Brexit. Bastani, if he's serious, should want his position tested in debate too.

CHALLENGE

So we renew the challenge we threw down in *Solidarity* of 30 May: "Bastani, why won't you debate Brexit?"

The best place for a debate now would be on a Novara Media broadcast.

Or some Labour left groups in London are discussing plans for live debates. Or both.

Time for an answer!

about the “party of strikes”

should use that as an opportunity to explain why Labour supports workers in struggle.

They should point to the link between the demands of strikers and Labour Party policy. They should say to striking rail workers, Picturehouse workers, and McDonald’s workers: “We are the political expression of the demands of your strike. If we’re in government, we will legislate to secure your demands”.

Momentum has run workshops with the Bakers’ Union on organising unorganised workplaces. That is brilliant, probably one of the best things Momentum has done.

It’s training people to go as external organisers to other people’s workplaces, which is not the same as convincing people about organising in their own work, but still, very useful.

I have heard about those workshops only in the pub. I am in Momentum, I pay attention to what Momentum says; I know who to vote for in NEC elections; I know when there’s canvassing; I have seen the videos about how much we love police and how much we hate foreign governments owning the railways... But I haven’t seen much about that kind of activist training.

A significant push could reverse the depressing statistics I started with. At the height, the great 1984-1985 miners’ strike involved fewer than 150,000 strikers. Around 20 times that number, close to three million, work in the supermarket industry. Collectively, their labour is of huge strategic significance.

IMPACT

Imagine a union organised across the retail and logistics sector, organising shop workers, warehouse workers, distribution workers, drivers. A strike by such a union would have an immense economic and social impact.

The Labour left has a few hundred thousand people. It has resources. We can take on tasks like that.

A Labour left government should repeal all the anti-union laws and ensure the right of workers to organise, and to strike. That should be their bottom line. They should cut the shackles on the union movement.

John McDonnell told a fringe at a union conference last week that repealing all trade union laws was one of his “first hundred days” pledges. At Labour Party conference, delegates voted unanimously for a motion to repeal, not just the 2016 laws, but all of the laws introduced by the Tories in the 1980s and 1990s, and to introduce positive, legal workers’ rights.

The 2017 manifesto had a lot of good things in it, but it did not commit to repealing all the anti-union laws. Instead, it committed to repealing the Trade Union Act, and rolling out sectional collective bargaining. That commitment would keep the ban on workplace ballots, which are used to suck momentum out of industrial disputes.

The last time I went on strike, my union made me have a consultative ballot first,



Jeremy Corbyn speaking at Unison national delegate conference in 2017

which is a ballot about whether you want a ballot. And that’s not in the anti-union legislation, but it is the kind of psychological adaptation to the anti-union legislation that I mentioned.

That takes two weeks, and then we have a ballot. It’s a postal ballot, and so that takes two weeks. I spend two weeks with people in my workplace saying that they’ve already voted but they haven’t, or saying that they’ve lost their ballot paper...

And then there’s another two weeks, and if the ballot comes back positively, you might have to give another two weeks’ notice before you can go on strike. And so you’ve had a two-month period between the thing that made you want to go on strike, and being able to take that action.

If you had a 30-day consultation because everyone’s losing their jobs, it is very possible that the bureaucracy of the anti-union laws means that everyone would have already been sacked before you could take a single day of action.

Labour’s 2017 manifesto doesn’t just leave that in. It would keep the ban on solidarity action, whereby more powerful workers can fight for ones with less strategic power. Solidarity action allows workers to take action on behalf of others, such as for example nurses and firefighters, who, because of the nature of their work, are reluctant to take full and sustained action.

And solidarity action allows us to fight for things that are not narrow industrial disputes about our own work, but big political issues. As the NHS was dismantled by the Tories privatising it bit by bit, the unions sat on their hands and did nothing.

Why hasn’t there been a massive campaign from Labour to scrap all the anti-union laws?

Part of it is that the unions, or more specifically, the union leadership, don’t want to see the old anti-union laws scrapped. Why is that? Because they have an interest in dampening the struggle. They have an interest in legislation that means that nothing can happen that is decided at the workplace, and instead everything must go through them.

There are some on the Labour left who see unions as important, but not because of their role in the workplace, instead on the basis of their size and power within the party. Trade unions have power in the party on the NEC and at conference, and in leadership elections. And they have not-inconsiderable funding, so unions must be kept on side.

At Unison conference this year, Dave Prentis declared that Unison would always be the first to fight Blair, and always the first to support Corbyn.

It’s not unimportant that Prentis felt that he had to say this, but it is also total nonsense.

BUREAUCRACY

For many decades it was the trade union bureaucracy that kept the Labour right in power.

They backed rightwing candidates, and they supported the right as they removed democratic structures in the Labour Party. They did that in the name of anti-Toryism. They failed to push the Labour Party to campaign for even the most basic demands in the interests of trade union members, such as the repeal of the anti-trade union laws.

Before 2015, the leadership of the trade unions had no idea that soon they would be

in a position where it would be possible to transform the Labour Party. And I suspect that they don’t want this movement to continue.

However, they know that many trade union activists and members are among those who voted for Corbyn. And they know that for them to stay in their positions of power, and get re-elected, they need the support of those members. That’s why Prentis is now a Corbynista.

SUPPORT

The Labour left would be stupid to dismiss the importance of union support.

But they shouldn’t shore it up by encouraging backroom deals between Labour leaders and union leaders, but instead by bringing about a renewed trade union movement.

A confident, democratic union movement that will protect Corbyn from Blairite coups; it will build the extraparliamentary movement needed to push through Corbyn’s programme. It would ask more of the Corbyn leadership, not limit it, as the unions have so far on the union laws. If necessary it would fight the Labour government to make it implement its own programme.

The Labour left can encourage this, by encouraging the momentum for renewal and democratic change to flow from the party into the unions. Just as under Blair, the wings of the party controlled by the right held each other back, we can see how that process could move forward: the industrial and political wings of the movement encouraging renewal in each other.

Nationalising money?

By Martin Thomas

At the session on nationalising the banks at the AWL's Ideas for Freedom event (21-24 June), we had, alongside Patrick Murphy speaking for that policy, a speaker from the campaign group Positive Money.

The Positive Money speaker told us that their policy is for “nationalising money” rather than nationalising banks. He presented it as a left-wing policy, similar in drift to but different in detail from public ownership and control of banks. In fact the proposal for “nationalising money” has a right-wing pedigree and logic. It originates in the Chicago Plan of 1933, written by economists who were all strong (though sometimes quirky) supporters of ultra-free-market capitalism.

Milton Friedman, the most famous ultra-free-market economist of the late 20th century, was trained in and later led the Chicago University economics department. After supporting the Chicago Plan when young, he later modified it into the “monetarist” policy — keep the growth of the stock of money in the economy to a fixed percentage each year.

That monetarist policy became notorious when adopted by the Thatcher government in 1980-2. It led to huge unemployment and (though controlling inflation was advertised as its main virtue) increased inflation.

Monetarism, however, served its purpose as doctrinal stiffening for an assault on the working class. As Alan Budd, then a Tory economic adviser, later put it, monetarism

was no good to control inflation, but it was “a very, very good way to raise unemployment, and raising unemployment was an extremely desirable way of reducing the strength of the working classes... what was engineered there in Marxist terms was a crisis of capitalism which re-created a reserve army of labour and has allowed the capitalists to make high profits ever since”.

In 1982 Thatcher abandoned monetarism and switched to more free-form class-war policies.

MONETARISM

The technical-seeming monetarist policy had the effects it did because the efforts to control the stock of money brought high rates of interest and thus a credit squeeze.

The rate at which the Bank of England lends to commercial banks, which had hovered around 4% since 1800 or so, was kept above 12% for years, and was 17% at one point. (It is now 0.5%).

Ironically, the credit squeeze also failed to control the stock of money well. The stock of money measured as the total in bank accounts is, as we'll see, very different from the stock measured as notes and coins; there are yet other measures; and they can often move in different directions. Economists summed up the experience as “Goodhart's Law”: any measure of money stock well controlled instantly becomes less important in substantive economics.

The crash of 2008, perceived as coming from loose credit, has revived proposals for more rigid public control of the stock of money, and on the left too. Switzerland had a referendum on 10 June on a proposal to limit money, effectively, to notes, coin, and balances at the central bank: it got 24% support. Martin Wolf, the liberal-leftish chief economics writer of the *Financial Times*, backed the proposal as a worthwhile experiment. In the USA, the leftish Democrat Dennis Kucinich and the Green Party have backed similar proposals.

At first hearing, “nationalising money” sounds like rounding circles. Isn't money “nationalised” already? It's pounds, dollars, euros, and those are issued and controlled by public bodies, no?

Today, however, only a small proportion of money, about 3% in Britain, is notes and coins created by public authorities. The other 97% of so is balances with banks, effectively tradable debt. That 97% is created by banks.

Imagine Iris has £1000 in cash. She will keep only £10 on her, and put the rest in the bank. The bank does not just sit on the £990. While Iris still has £990, Mya will also have £990 when the bank gives her a mortgage to buy a house from Helen, and that £990 then reappears as new bank-balance money held by Helen.

The bank then gives out £900-odd again as an overdraft to Anika. Anika banks or spends that money, and then a bank uses it to make a loan to Lara...

Already there is almost £4000 in circula-

tion. The banks have to keep something in the vaults — it used to be a “reserve requirement”, today more usually a “capital requirement” — to be able to pay out when one person or another decides to cash out her whole bank balance. But that stash in the vaults need only be a small proportion of the total stock of money in circulation.

The system allows for an elastic response of money circulation to economic demands. That elasticity is also, however, a driver of speculation and crises. Thus the proposal to rigidify the system, by requiring banks to hold “100% reserves”, is attractive both to free-marketeers wanting market discipline to bite hard and quickly, and to left-minded people wanting to quell crises.

According to Marxist analyses, an elastic money and credit system is indispensable for a developed capitalist system. It will probably be indispensable even in the earlier eras of working-class rule. Rigid rules are likely to produce similar results to monetarism in 1980s Britain: the system slips round them, but meanwhile is disrupted by the attempt to rigidify.

Public ownership and control of the banks is a different proposition. It is about getting public control of the large chunks of money currently distributed by the banks as profits, and the even larger chunks currently allocated for productive investment through short-sighted, greed-focused, profit-first mechanisms.

• More: bit.ly/monetarist; bit.ly/ann-p

The pitfalls of “everything is getting worse”

Chris Reynolds reviews Hans Rosling's *Factfulness*

Until the late 1950s, with decreasing conviction, the official Communist Parties in western Europe promoted as a dogma the idea that working-class living-standards were falling because an iron law of capitalism made it so, and of course were worse than workers' living standards in the USSR.

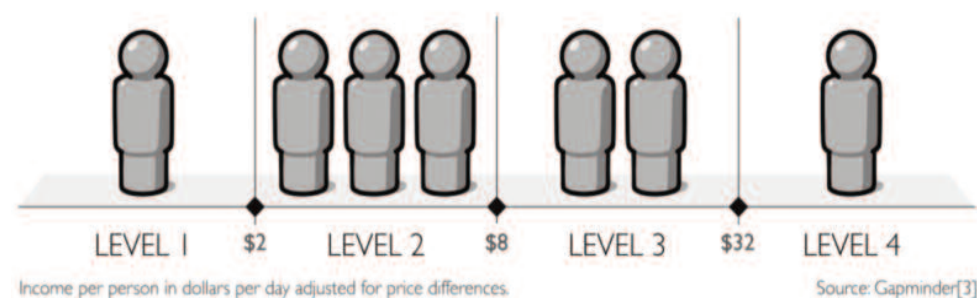
CP writers were commissioned to select and shape statistics to “prove” that claim. In France, critical Marxists denounced this attitude as “misérabilisme”.

Workers whose households had for the first time fridges, washing machines, TVs, central heating could not fail to conclude that the trade-union and political activists who told them everything was getting worse were exaggerating and hyping, so other things they said should be taken with a pinch of salt too.

And encouraging workers to wallow in seeing themselves as victims is not revolutionary. Experienced organisers know that the people in the workplace who complain most are usually not the best trade-unionists. They are too taken up with complaining about their workmates, and with self-pity.

Hans Rosling's *Factfulness* may appear at first to be a book whitewashing capitalism. Rosling was (he died in 2017) a reformist mixed-economy guy. But his facts are important.

He shows soberly that until 1966 over 50% of humanity lived in absolute poverty. By 2017 that was down to 9%.



Absolute poverty means having to walk every day to get (unsafe) water and gather wood for cooking; eating much the same thing every day; having little or no access to health care and education.

Rosling distinguishes four broad levels of living standards in the world, with two between absolute poverty and “level 4”, which is an individual on £9,000 a year or more in Britain.

The combination of capital's drive to expansion, and the work of labour movements across the world, has brought the majority to the point where they have some access to education, health care, and reading. At the same time capital drives the environment towards disaster, sharpens inequalities, and promotes insecurity and destructive competition.

Capitalism generates the need for socialism, but also the productive and human basis for it.

In some of Marx's earliest writings, the working class appears as the revolutionary agency only via philosophical construction, as the absolute negation of existing society. Even then Marx wrote against misérabilisme:

“The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submissiveness and humbleness, in short, all the qualities of the rabble, and the proletariat, which will not permit itself to be treated as rabble, needs its courage, its self-confidence, its pride and its sense of independence even more than its bread”.

We should also learn from Marx's later writings, in which he analyses how capital, while it exploits workers, also has to educate and train them, assemble them in large groups, increase their “cultural” needs (if only to sell stuff to them), concede that they are not entirely property-less but own their labour-power. Labour movements can expand and have expanded what Marx calls “the civilising moment of capital”.

“The worker's participation in the higher, even cultural satisfactions, the agitation for his own interests, newspaper subscriptions, attending lectures, educating his children, developing his taste etc., [is his] share of civilisation which distinguishes him from the slave...”

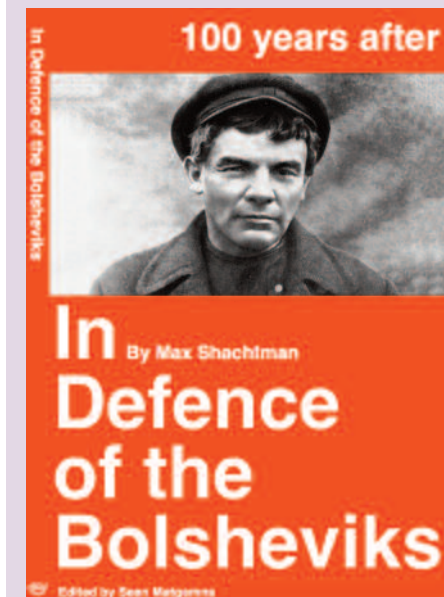
In Defence of The Bolsheviks: new book coming soon

Max Shachtman's response to Ernest Erber in 1949, deserves to be considered one of the classic polemics of the Marxist movement.

It summarises and vindicates the Bolsheviks' work to build a revolutionary party and lead a revolution.

It makes the case for continuing socialist efforts in times both of high and of low political temperature.

• See www.workersliberty.org/books for more information about our books.



Life and politics in Iraq

Nadia Mahmood of the Worker-communist Party of Iraq spoke to *Solidarity*

We boycotted the [Iraqi] elections [of May 2018] with a very active campaign. Now many political parties and candidates in particular those who did not win seats complain that there was corruption.

The Prime Minister says that the vote count was so corrupt that all the votes need to be recounted.

It has been agreed that votes need to be recounted. A new commission formed by nine judges took the responsibility for the recounting, instead of the election commission. Then a storage site housing half of Baghdad's ballot boxes caught fire, and the government said they had arrested those behind it.

Again, in Kirkuk city, a suicide car bomb went off near a storage site housing ballot boxes two days before a manual recount was due to begin.

The old parliament has ended its term, but a new parliament has not been elected. It is a chaotic situation.

Opposing political Islam is a big issue. Supporting economic and social demands is a big issue, like the right to electricity, especially in July when it gets very hot.

All these things build towards our strategic aim: getting people organised to end the current political system.

Solidarity: What are the conditions of everyday life like in Baghdad now?

Nadia: Now there is the crisis with Turkey, the percentage of water that comes to Iraq has fallen. Electricity we still have on and off. The electricity supply is much better than it was ten years ago, or even three years ago, but we still have power cuts. Even in some areas of privatised electricity supply, there isn't 24-hour electricity.

S: What about schools and hospitals?

Nadia: Conditions are horrible. No improvement. Families teach their kids because kids can't learn in schools, unless the parents can afford private schools. Even when the government puts money into schools, the corruption is so high and so widespread, that the schools do not really get built.

Hospitals suffer from lack of medicines and equipment... People go to private hospitals, they don't rely on government hospitals. Public hospitals are not clean, they lack everything.

Even in periods like 2011-2013, when the oil price was quite high, no-one benefits here. It goes to people in government, in power, people who have access to money.

Unemployment is very high, especially among young people. In general there is no recruitment to the public sector, in line with World Bank and IMF policies. They want people to go and work in the private sector, and we don't have a strong private sector in Iraq.

When there are any jobs in the public sector, they are allocated by political parties to win the loyalty of the people they recruit.

The majority work in the informal private sector. Some young people find no solution but to go into the militias. The percentage of unemployed women is very high.

The unemployment level is increasing for two reasons: a) because there is very limited

scope for state employment (the main two sectors are health and internal security, and b) the private sector is not active or dominant in Iraq. Thus the job opportunities are very limited.

Every year there are more people graduating from universities without jobs. Although there is a lack of accurate statistics, surveys show that in 2017, about 56 percent of young females were unemployed, compared to 29 percent for young males.

In the informal sector, people work in services, in restaurants, in construction, as market traders. Their number is more than four million, and they constitute 53% of the total number of workers, 55% of the total number of male workers and 48% of female workers.

Although the workers and state employed organised many sit ins and strikes, the unions in general are weak. This can be attributed to a number of reasons.

The trade unions are not allowed to work in the public sector in line with law number 52 issued in 1987. That law issued by the Saddam Hussain regime remains untouched.

Trade unions have few roots in the working class. They have become bureaucratic and isolated. They care about their relationships with the outside world, their invitations to workshops, their payments for travel. They look as if they are more accountable to international organisations than to Iraqi workers.

They compete with each other, and sometimes they mushroom and split from each other. We have about six trade union federations. They have come together under a new network called a "Conference of the Iraqi Unions and Trade Unions", but still there is competition between them and other trade unions such as those linked to the government.

The government wants to introduce a new law in line with international norms regarding freedom of forming trade unions and their operation in the public sector. This is under discussion now between the government and trade unions.

They will observe whether or not a union has members within a given company. If they do have members and they can prove that, the government will register the union formally. We have to wait and see the first draft of this new law.

One change that has taken place is the social insurance law. This allows for workers in the private sector to be insured. Previously only public sector workers had the right to have social insurance.

The achievements of the trade unions seems to be their ability to shape some new laws regarding social insurance, and so on. They appear active on things to do with government and laws, but their role and impact on the daily lives and demands of the workers looks very limited.

S: The election result, according to European experts, was unexpected, with the high vote for the coalition of the Sadr movement and the Communist Party. What is your assessment?

Nadia: The turnout for the election was very low. The Sadr movement and the Communist Party, as parties that rely on their membership, mobilised their membership. Other parties do not have such influence, and neither do the other mainstream parties.

People are upset with Abadi and his allies, saying that they haven't provided security or



Iraqi women shop for books on Mutanabbi Street, a major cultural hub in Baghdad,

electricity or jobs. Al-Sadr is trying to position himself as a representative of the opposition.

Al-Sistani [the foremost ayatollah of Iraq's Shias] spoke in a way that would encourage people who follow him not to vote for the incumbents. But Sadr has had ministers, too. So he is not really new.

S: I don't see a good case for boycotting these elections. Often in history, especially in the 19th century, socialist parties built themselves by contesting elections, even though these elections were extremely undemocratic.

Nadia: We don't see our boycott of the election as a passive action. We wanted an active boycott to spread the word, expose the ruling parties, and demand a different system. We used every method to expose them. We acted in order to make our voice heard.

The election was not just undemocratic. It was corrupt, violent, full of bribes. People bought ballot boxes. There were no normal conditions for elections. As we have seen later on the site of ballot boxes were burned ones the government decided to recount the votes.

S: What are the conditions for open political activity? I hear that Mutanabbi Street, the central bookselling street of Baghdad, has been rebuilt after being bombed in 2007. Is it still lively, offering books and pamphlets?

Nadia: Yes. And not only Baghdad. The culture of Mutanabbi Street has started to spread to other towns as well, like Basra, where they have a similar street, and Nasiriyah. There is space for open political activities.

But also there are activists who have been kidnapped, with their whereabouts unknown. Faraj al-Badri, Jalal Al-Shehmani, and others were kidnapped and released through the intervention of the government itself, as it appears those who kidnapped them were known to the government.

It has been repeatedly said the militias now kidnap the activists, not the government. Yet these militias and their political parties are

parts of the government itself.

There is still terrorism. An activist was kidnapped in Nasiriyah because he called publicly for a boycott of the elections. We know who did it: an Iran-backed militia.

S: The Shia-Sunni sectarian conflict: is it sharpening or weakening?

Nadia: The Shia political parties, seeing how people are upset and angry at them, have started to change their names. For example, Amar al-Hakim used to lead the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Now he has established a new party called the Wisdom Party or al-Hikmah.

On the Sunni side, the speaker of the Iraqi Parliament split from the Muslim Brotherhood and set up a new Civil Reform Party.

These parties have changed their religious names to civil ones, but not their affiliations. People are so upset with religious parties that they want to appear as civil parties. Now everyone speaks against sectarianism, against corruption — they say, "we are all Iraqis, there is no difference between Sunni and Shia", and so on. People can't use the same discourse they used before 2010.

But when Maliki speaks about the "political majority" and needing a government of the "political majority", he means Shia. And apart from sectarianism, what do the parties represent? Not Arab nationalism: they have no ideology or identity. The Kurdish party, it's clear, it's about their Kurdish nationality. So although they denounce their previous discourse, in fact they act in line with the same sectarian and nationalist base.

S: Has segregation in Baghdad eased?

Nadia: It might not be like sectarian conflict in 2006, but still there are Shia groups who claim control of some areas in Baghdad. The al-Sadr trend controls Sadr city. Recently Hezbollah in Iraq claimed to control Palestine Street in Baghdad and their militia has clashed with other government militia groups.

The conflict is still there... but it's different now.

Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
 - A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
 - A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
 - Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
 - A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression.
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
 - Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
 - Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
 - Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
 - Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.



If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

Events

Saturday 7 July

London Pride parade
11am, route TBC
bit.ly/2JNzKIQ

Wednesday 11 July

London Left Against Brexit meeting
7pm, Central Hall Westminster,
London SW1H 9NH
bit.ly/2IPbtDP

12-13 July

People, Pits & Politics Festival
Durham Town Hall, Market Place,
Durham DH1 3NE
bit.ly/2JZI33E

Friday 13 July

Protest Trump's visit
2pm, Portland Place, London,
W1A 1AA
bit.ly/2iUocaK

Saturday 14 July

Durham Miners' Gala
Various times, Durham
www.durhamminers.org/gala

Sunday 15 July

Momentum national conference
10am, Durham Town Hall, Mar-
ket Place, Durham DH1 3NE
bit.ly/2ta1tJt

Have an event you want listing? Email:
solidarity@workersliberty.org

More online at www.workersliberty.org Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

Sheffield Labour debates Spearmint Rhino

LABOUR

By Geoff Wolf, Sheffield
Labour Party, p.c.

On Tuesday 19 June Sheffield City Council Licensing committee held a public meeting to discuss the continuation of the Sexual Entertainment Venue (SEV) licence, which allows the adult entertainment venue Spearmint Rhino to operate in the city.

Throughout the day there were eloquent arguments presented, including a testimony from a worker and her positive experiences of working in the sexual entertainment industry. Many of the opposition arguments were formulated around "the fact that the premises are sited in a residential area" and the Public Sector Equality Duty and gender equality (PSED).

The PSED means that the Council must thoroughly consider the implications in the context of licensing, of effects on equality on its citizens.

Most of the opposition to the location of the venue was spearheaded by Sheffield Hallam University, as Spearmint Rhino "doesn't fit" with the surroundings, or with the University's master plan for the vicinity. Likely we will see a form of gentrification, as at University of Arts London and the Elephant and Castle development, as the conglomerate neo-liberal University monster eats up the

city and its identity and history, white washing and destroying communities.

Each year the city council reviews the selective licensing for SEV throughout Sheffield. There are only two venues in and around the city that still hold such licences. Businesses like these have been in decline in the last five years, with up to a third of them no longer trading.

In the opinion of some city councillors, and Sheffield Labour students and other groups, taking away any woman's choice of legal, and safe employment is not a modern feminist stance. To be against the licence is aiding with the reproduction of patriarchal attitudes towards women.

There was many groups involved in the opposition to the venue, such as Niki Bond (Sheffield Central Constituency Women's Officer) and other groups such as Not Buying It Sheffield and the Women's Equality Party.

When providing her stance on the issue to the panel, Niki Bond suggested that dancers provide extras to the people that attend the premises. She said she was in general agreement with Sheffield Hallam University's argument on location.

While many of the arguments made by the opposition were insightful and representative of some oppressions towards women in so-



ciety, these conversations were not had with the workers, or many women that engage in such forms of employment as lap dancing.

The disagreements were formulated from no knowledge of the experience of workers at the venue in Sheffield, but just a theoretical idea of what the work would be like from a middle-class liberal feminist perspective.

On the other hand the people who supported the protest outside the City Hall, such as the Labour Students group, had been in conversation with the workers for a number of weeks leading up to the event, to ensure that the voices and concerns of workers were heard in the process of the public hearing.

Sheffield City Council Licensing Sub Committee has given establishment leave to continue trading in the city.

Since the council decided to extend the licence by a year, an application for judicial review has been submitted to Leeds High Court, to overturn a decision to remove the cap on two strip clubs in the city.

Labour: dump militarism!

By Michael Elms

On 25 June, Labour Shadow Defence Secretary Nia Griffith made a speech to the Royal United Services Institute, a think-tank made up of retired generals and military-industrial-complex grantees with well-paid jobs in "strategic intelligence consulting firms" and the like.

You might have hoped that a leader of a radically left-wing Labour Party would have had some hard words for the masters of war. Maybe something about scrapping Trident, nationalising British arms manufacturers, and repurposing the shipyards and factories for socially-useful ends. Maybe something about taking the 2% of GDP spent on the military (as per NATO rules) and spending it on fighting climate change or helping people displaced by wars? She might even have repudiated previous Labour governments' records of imperial adventures, from At-

lee's war in Malaysia to Blair's invasion of Iraq.

Griffith actually reiterated Labour's 2017 manifesto pledge to keep Trident; said that "the Opposition would warmly welcome any rise" in military spending; denounced the "deep cuts" that have been made to the Ministry of Defence budget; and proudly reminded the RUSI mandarins that it was Attlee and Bevin who set up NATO in the first place.

Griffith accompanied this drum-banging for more weapons of mass destruction with the announcement that "Labour is — and has always been — a proudly internationalist party."

This kind of eye-popping double-think has been seen before, when Emily Thornberry unveiled the Labour foreign policy at the 2017 conference, quoting Martin Luther King's call for "a revolution in values" to introduce a policy of continuing arms sales but with slightly tighter restrictions on bribing the British arms salesmen.

Griffith quoted Corbyn: "There is no contradiction between working for peace across the world and doing what is necessary to keep us safe." Translation: "don't worry about Corbyn's peacenik speechifying, we will continue the favoured foreign policy of the British bourgeoisie, propping up NATO and supporting US military "police actions" around the world. And we won't touch war profiteers' business interests."

Like Thornberry, whose aim was to make it clear that one can wear an MLK T-shirt while subsidising sales of UK fighter jets, the current Labour policy on defence is about sitting between two stools: trying to reconcile a lefty leadership with a continuation of Blair-era foreign policy.

Labour should not wave at anti-imperialism with one hand and slip cash to the masters of war on the other. Ditch militarism — end arms exports — scrap Trident, and spend the money on human need!

HE pay ballot new test for UCU

By a Cambridge UCU Member

On 29 June, UCU confirmed that, between August and October this year, it will ballot HE members for industrial action over pay.

This follows a consultative members' ballot on whether to accept the 2% pay rise offered by the Universities and Colleges' Employers Association (UCEA). On a 47.7% turnout, 82% of UCU members rejected the offer and 65% said they would be prepared to take industrial action.

Additionally, a Special Higher Education Sector Conference (SHESC) was held on 21 June, following requests from at least 20 UCU HE branches to discuss the United Superannuation Scheme (USS) dispute. Conference passed numerous motions on the Joint Expect Panel (JEP) into the valuation of the USS, including motions relating to the workings and scrutiny of the JEP, as well as pension provision, reporting, and mechanisms for re-opening the USS dispute. Congress also passed motions on democracy and transparency during ongoing industrial action, called for the resignation of USS CEO Bill Galvin, and called upon the UCU Higher Education Committee to identify USS members in post-92 universities so that they have a consultative voice in USS matters and the opportunity to engage in campaigning work.

All this should be taken in context of the broader political picture



in UCU. As covered in *Solidarity* 472, UCU officials repeatedly disrupted the proceedings at the union's Congress on 30 May-1 June, preventing discussion of motions criticising Sally Hunt, the General Secretary. This disruption included three walkouts by Hunt and other senior UCU staff members. Represented by a branch of Unite, these staffers claimed that the offending motions would violate their employment rights and declared a trade dispute. The majority of Congress delegates signed a joint statement as "Our UCU", which resolved to continue discussing the disputed motions at a recall conference, and to urge a debate in all UCU branches and bodies to discuss union democracy.

On Tuesday 12 June, Cambridge UCU passed two motions challenging the national leadership over the events at Congress. The first motion, which carried 23-9, called on Hunt to affirm "that she respects the sovereignty of Congress" and

to "condemn the disruption to the democratic process of Congress". The second motion, which carried 29-4, reaffirmed UCU members' right to dissent. It described the leadership's disruptions as 'a threat to democracy in the Union and a denial of the will of its members', and demanded a recall of Congress. Other UCU branches, including those at Warwick and UCL, have since passed similar motions.

The HE pay strike ballot presents a chance to test UCU members' newfound combativeness, but judging by the consultative ballot's 47.7% turnout, we must work diligently to meet the 50% threshold for industrial action.

While the UCU leadership will almost certainly try to stifle dissent through calls for unity in this latest industrial dispute, we must continue to build a rank-and-file movement to transform UCU into a militant, member-led union.

Tube strikes during Trump visit

By Tubeworker bulletin

RMT has named dates for a forthcoming drivers' strike on the London Underground Piccadilly Line.

The strike begins at 21:00 on Wednesday 11 July, and finishes at 01:00 on Saturday 14 July.

The dispute has been prompted by what the union calls a complete "breakdown in industrial relations", with management adopting

an increasingly disciplinarian and authoritarian approach, including obstructing union reps from carrying out basic trade union duties. Piccadilly Line management has also failed to honour agreements made in previous disputes.

This will see four days of impact on the service, with two full strike days, and will also involve Night Tube drivers as it covers their Friday night-Saturday morning turns. The strike also coincides with the

visit to the UK of US President Donald Trump. We don't imagine Trump was planning on using the Picc too much, but if the strike disrupts his visit in any way then that's an added bonus!

Train maintainers at Ruislip depot will also strike from 07:00 hours on 12 July to 07:00 hours on 13 July, 19:00 hours on 13 July to 07:00 hours 14 July, and 07:00 hours 15 July to 19:00 hours on 15 July in a dispute over pay parity and train preparation time.

Strikes at John Roan school

By Gemma Short

National Education Union members at John Roan school in south east London struck on 20, 26, 27 June, and 3, 5, 11 and 12 July against academisation.

An Ofsted inspection in March rated the school "inadequate", which both school workers and parents are challenging, and the school was handed an order for

forced academisation. Parents have joined picket lines, organised joint meetings and launched a legal challenge alongside NEU members. Non-teaching staff, who are members of GMB, are also balloting for strikes.

Follow the dispute and send messages of support at: www.thejohnroannut.org/ or on Twitter at twitter.com/JohnRoan-Resists

PCS pay ballot opens

PCS members are being balloted for national strikes over pay.

PCS members in all areas of the civil service are being balloted for strikes in order to get the government to lift the 1% pay cap. PCS has submitted a 5% pay claim to the government.

The ballot opened on 18 June and closes on 23 July.

RMT AGM shows long way to go on equalities

By an RMT member

The Annual General Meeting of the Rail, Maritime, and Transport union (RMT) took place from 24-29 June in Edinburgh.

It was preceded by a Special General Meeting, on 30 May, which debated the question of whether RMT should reaffiliate to the Labour Party, voting by a narrow margin not to reaffiliate.

The AGM passed radical policy on issues like nationalisation of the banks, meaning RMT now joins the Fire Brigades Union in advocating public ownership of the banks and finance. The motion, submitted by the union's Bakerloo Line branch, commits RMT to campaigning for any future Corbyn-led Labour government to implement this policy. Motions were also passed committing the union to mobilise for the demonstrations against Donald Trump's visit on 13 July, and the protests against the far-right on 14 July. This latter is particularly significant, as statements from some RMT leaders around the 9 June anti-fascist demonstrations had played down the threat from the far-right.

MOTIONS

Motions were also passed which aimed to bolster the union's campaigns against "Driver Only Operation", including ones which sought to widen the scope for using union funds to support sustained industrial action.

The AGM was also notable for discussion and activity around equalities issues. Some LGBT+ delegates and supporters led a walk out when Elaine Smith MSP, who had campaigned and voted against equal marriage, addressed the AGM. So scandalised was at least one other delegate that they abstained on policy submitted by the RMT's LGBT+ conference, on opposing "gay cure" therapies, in "retaliation" for the way the walk-out had allegedly "embarrassed" the union. This shows the significant work that still needs to be done in the labour movement around equalities issues.

This was also demonstrated by the fate of proposed amendments to RMT's rule book that sought to empower the union's equalities

committees, which are currently only "advisory" bodies. Rule changes aimed to give the committees more scope to determine the agendas for their own meetings and conferences.

National officers opposed the changes, claiming they sought to disempower the union's National Executive Committee (even though the changes would have had no impact on the NEC's role or powers). The rule changes were also broken up and presented to the AGM in parts, with no prior discussion or consultation with the proposing branches, despite having been submitted as single proposals. They were defeated by margins of around three votes.

Other rule changes, on allowing branches to submit items for the AGM via email rather than just via post, and extending the deadline for amendments to the AGM, passed.

In more positive news for equalities issues within the union, the AGM passed a motion on union guidance for reps representing members accused of breaches of equalities principles (e.g., sexual harassment, bigoted language of behaviour, discriminations, etc.), which aim to ensure reps avoid arguments which "defend" the actions themselves or downplay the importance of equalities principles or policies.

Equalities activists within RMT plan to continue campaigning for the union to put equality at the heart of its work, and ensure that black, women, LGBT+, and disabled members' voices are consistently heard within the union.

Michelle Rodgers for RMT President!

Workers' Liberty supporters within RMT are supporting Northern Rail worker Michelle Rodgers in the forthcoming election for the union's presidency.

Michelle is standing on a platform of "Democracy, Equality, Solidarity", seeking to ensure that rank-and-file participation and control, and equality are central to the union.

See future issues of *Solidarity* for more information on the campaign.

Sheffield tram strikes

By Charlotte Zalens

Unite members working on the Supertram network in Sheffield will strike on 9 and 12 July in a dispute over pay.

Workers had been offered a 26p

per hour pay rise for both this year and next year, which they have rejected.

Over 200 tram drivers and conductors, employed by Stagecoach, took part in the ballot and 91.7% voted for strikes.



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For a workers' government

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Against Trump, Brexit, new EU border policing For free movement and migrant rights!

EU fences off refugees

By Hugh Edwards

As the leaders of the EU countries on 27-29 June put their names to their “universal accord” on immigration policy, news arrived of another horrific tragedy off the coast of Libya.

A hundred men, women, and children drowned as their rubber boat exploded and they drifted helplessly in waters where NGO rescue ships are now banned by Marco Minniti, Italy’s Minister of the Interior, not in the current right-wing Italian government, but in the previous centre-left one.

Their deaths bring the total in the last months to their highest rate for a long time, despite a significant drop in the numbers attempting to escape.

That the assembled dignitaries couldn’t even be bothered to utter their usual platitudes of pious sympathy underlined that the principal purpose of their meeting was for each participant to find a way of saving face before her or his nation’s rising tide of populist racism.

The nub of the solution amounted to little more than each being able to reassure public opinion at home that it will be their neighbour, not their own country, which will open doors to migrants.

The most nauseating spectacle in this grotesquerie was offered by the “government of change” in Italy. Its Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini, has made the battle-cry “Italy for Italians” the launchpad of his campaign to “rid the country of immi-

grants, Roma, Sinti” and the European Union, so he says, of its bureaucrats and elites.

He and his government leader Giuseppe Conte got little further than being permitted to rhetorically claim one victory after another. Under the weasel words of the EU text, none of the other countries is under any further obligation in matters of migrant reception or redistribution. But Germany, the butt of Salvini’s anti-Europe rant, has reserved the right to send back to Italy those originally disembarking there.

French president Macron, having saved the Dublin Treaty, has put the ball firmly back in Salvini’s court.

The EU meeting, behind a curtain of hypocrisy, mystification, and contradictions, agreed on a militarisation of the EU’s external frontiers, with 10,000 more armed police. Turkey’s tyrant leader was rewarded with another €3 billion to copperfasten the Balkans’ maritime frontiers. Another €500 million was allocated to cement Africa’s sub-Saharan borders, while plans underway for detention centres in Africa will probably come with additional bribes.

The Libyan coastguard, furnished anew by Salvini with even more sophisticated motor boats are accorded full power in the Mediterranean, and the NGO ships are denied rights.

As Gino Strada, founder of the NGO “Emergency”, summed up this “criminal Pact”, nothing has changed except for the worse.



US socialists challenge Trump

By Ira Berkovic

America’s largest socialist organisation, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), has taken a lead in organising radical action in solidarity with migrants and in opposition to the policies of the Trump administration, calling for the abolition of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

DSA activists hounded Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen out of a Mexican restaurant with chants of “if kids don’t eat in peace, you don’t eat in peace”, and its local branches have been organising and supporting “abolish ICE” protests through-

out the country. The Metro DC DSA branch organised a protest outside the home of former ICE director Tom Homan, and DSA groups have led protests in Hawaii, Sacramento, Los Angeles, and elsewhere.

Many locally-produced DSA materials display an admirable, if somewhat disconnected, radicalism, combining demands to abolish ICE with the slogan “abolish profit”.

Situating its calls for the abolition of ICE within its wider programme, including its campaigns for universal health-care, can contribute to the building of a movement that is not merely negatively anti-Trump but a positive movement for pro-working-class policies.

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